

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515**

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA
CHAIRMAN**

**before the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA, THE PACIFIC, AND THE
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT**

“The South Pacific Tuna Treaty: Next Steps for Renewal”

April 2, 2009

In 1988, the United States and 16 Pacific Island nations ratified and entered into the Multilateral Treaty on Fisheries between the Governments of Certain Pacific Island States and the Government of the United States, often referred to as the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT). Under the Treaty, the U.S. tuna industry pays for access to certain areas of the western and central Pacific, including the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of the Pacific Island parties to the Treaty. The U.S. government also provides about \$18 million annually to the Pacific Island parties via the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs.

The Treaty is important to the U.S. tuna industry, and especially to the U.S. Territory of American Samoa as its private sector economy is more than 80% dependent, either directly or indirectly, on the industry. Without the agreement, American Samoa’s two canneries would not be supplied, and the jobs of about 5,000 tuna cannery workers would be at risk.

The Treaty is also important to the Pacific Island nations. Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Solomon Islands, and Kiribati receive the greatest share of the Treaty funds.

But, as the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has noted, “the influence of the SPTT in the region may decline in the future as competition from other fishing nations in the region grows [and] at this time, it is not clear how this potential trend may affect the negotiations for the renewal of the SPTT or efforts by parties to the Treaty to address issues of overcapacity.”

Also, adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2004, a related agreement, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries (WCPF) Convention, established a Commission to conserve and manage tuna and other highly migratory fish stocks in the region. According to CRS, “over 30 countries, territories, and other entities participate in the organization. These include those with major tuna fishing fleets, such as the United States, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, and the Philippines,” and with the rising influence of other national fleets in the Western and Central Pacific this may raise the profile of the WCPFC as the main system for monitoring and controlling tuna fishing in the region.”

How these factors will impact the SPTT remains to be seen. For now, given the Treaty’s importance to the U.S. tuna industry and the Pacific Island parties, the Subcommittee has invited Mr. Williams Gibbon-Fly from the U.S. Department of State to testify before us about what steps the U.S. should take for renewal considering that the Treaty expires in 2013.

Since the 2002 extension of the Treaty provided licenses for up to 40 U.S. purse seiners, with an option for 5 additional licenses reserved for joint venture arrangements, to fish for tuna in the EEZ’s of the Pacific Island Parties, what does the U.S. intend to do to make sure these licenses are extended? Are the Pacific Island Parties supportive of renewal? Are the U.S. and Pacific Island Parties supportive of general provisions regarding fishing capacity, revenue sharing, and linkages between the Treaty and the WCPF Convention? What is current U.S. thinking regarding the amendments to the Treaty and its annexes which were included in the 2002 extension, such as revised procedures for amending the annexes, a revised program fee formula, updating the methods available for reporting, and provisions on the use of a vessel monitoring system (VMS)? What is the possibility of making the Treaty open to U.S. long-liners from the U.S. Territories, including American Samoa? What are areas of concern, if any, as we move forward?

These are the questions we hope are answered today, and I now recognize our Ranking Member, the gentleman from Illinois, for any opening statement he may have.